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FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0195  
INFO SOMALIA COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
IGAD COLLECTIVE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RHMCSUU/CJTF HOA  
RHMFISS/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000176

SIPDIS  
SBU DELIBERATIVE PROCESS  
DEPARTMENT FOR AF, AF/E, AF/RSA AND PM  
AFRICOM AND CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD  
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA-WATCHER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019-01-15  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHSA](#) [MOPS](#) [KJUS](#) [DJ](#) [SO](#) [KE](#)  
SUBJECT: SOMALI PIRACY: DJIBOUTI FOREIGN MINISTER REAFFIRMS  
CONCURRENCE TO TRANSFER SUSPECTED PIRATES

REF: DJIBOUTI 156; DJIBOUTI 116; DJIBOUTI 27; DJIBOUTI 16

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CLASSIFIED BY: Eric M. Wong, DCM, U.S. Department of State, U.S.  
Embassy, Djibouti; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) In a March 11 meeting with Ambassador and DCM, Foreign  
Minister Mohamed Ali Youssouf and MFA Director of Bilateral  
Relations Mohamed Ali Hassan reaffirmed the Government of  
Djibouti's concurrence to allow the USG to transit suspected  
pirates by air, via Djibouti, en route to Kenya for prosecution.

¶2. (U) FM Youssouf highlighted Djibouti's adherence to  
international accords on counter-piracy--including the 1988  
Convention For the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety  
of Maritime Navigation (SUA), relevant UNSC resolutions, and the  
"Djibouti Code of Conduct" adopted at the January 26-29 IMO  
conference hosted by Djibouti. While reiterating that Djibouti  
currently lacked the juridical means or infrastructure to prosecute  
or detain pirates, he underscored Djibouti's commitment to support  
counter-piracy, just as Djibouti supported counter-terrorism.

¶3. (C) FM Youssouf reiterated (ref B) that the Government of  
Djibouti's concurrence to allow the USG to transit suspected  
pirates depended on the following caveats:

a.) That suspected pirates remain entirely in U.S. custody;

b.) That any transfer be immediate (i.e., from inbound helicopter  
to outbound fixed-wing, with as little time as possible spent on  
the ground in Djibouti); and

c.) That transfers be done with no publicity of Djibouti's role.

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FM REQUESTS USG RETAIN CUSTODY OF PIRATES  
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¶4. (C) Ambassador explained that the USG would notify the GODJ in  
advance of any transfers. Every precaution would be taken in  
planning these operations, to ensure a rapid transfer of the  
suspected pirates upon arrival from naval vessels to aircraft, for  
onward transport to Kenya. In the unlikely event that a suspected  
pirate had to remain in Djibouti overnight, the USG would  
immediately notify the GODJ. FM Youssouf emphasized that the  
suspected pirates must remain in USG custody at all times during  
the transfer.

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PASSIVE STRATCOM: AVOID PUBLICITY  
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¶5. (C) Ambassador probed the FM's earlier statement (ref B) on the  
need to avoid any publicity of Djibouti's role, noting that while  
we would seek to minimize attention to these transfers, it was  
unlikely that Djibouti's role could be kept secret. Not only were  
there many media organizations covering the piracy issue, but the  
suspected pirates were being transferred to face public  
prosecution, in which the circumstances of their transfer would

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probably be revealed. FM Youssouf noted that activities related to  
Somalia remained sensitive for Djibouti, which had been applying  
pressure for more than 20 years to promote Somali reconciliation.  
Nevertheless, he acknowledged that given high media interest in  
piracy, international media would likely report on pirate  
transfers, which risked mentioning Djibouti. While seeking to  
minimize any attention to Djibouti, FM Youssouf did not anticipate  
or expect its role could be kept secret.

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NO ASYLUM IN DJIBOUTI FOR SUSPECTED PIRATES  
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16. (C) Asked how the GODJ would address potential asylum claims--in the event that suspected pirates requested asylum from Djibouti, while being transferred in Djibouti--FM Youssouf stated categorically that the GODJ would not provide asylum to pirates. Such individuals were pirates, not political prisoners, he said.

17. (C) COMMENT. The Foreign Minister's reaffirmation of Djibouti's willingness to accept suspected pirates for transfer by air, reflects the GODJ's strong support for counter-piracy efforts, despite political sensitivities arising from being a predominantly ethnic Somali society. His statements to us constitute policy-level concurrence by the GODJ for short-turnaround, no-active-publicity, USG-custody transfer of pirates through Djibouti. END COMMENT.  
SWAN

To view the entire SMART message, go to URL [http://repository.state.sgov.gov/\\_layouts/OSS\\_SearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:9c33a5d2-1786-49f9-b6](http://repository.state.sgov.gov/_layouts/OSS_SearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:9c33a5d2-1786-49f9-b6)